

Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

31 May 2022

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

Forty-second session

Geneva, 6-8 July 2022

Item 2 (b) of the provisional agenda

Work on the Globally Harmonized System of

Classification and Labelling of Chemicals:

Simultaneous classification in physical hazard classes and precedence of hazards

Status report on the work of the informal working group on combinations of physical hazards

Transmitted by the expert from Germany on behalf of the informal working group

1. In December 2018 the Sub-Committee adopted a new item for its program of work dealing with combinations of physical hazards. The terms of reference for this work are laid down in ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2018/21, as amended in the report of the Sub-Committee on its thirty-sixth session, see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/72, paragraph 74. After a less active phase in the last biennium, the corresponding informal working group (IWG) has picked up its work again in this biennium.

2. Since the last session in December 2021, the IWG on combinations of physical hazards convened in three web-meetings. Two further web-meetings on very specific subjects were held with smaller break-out groups. The expert from Germany would like to thank the experts of this IWG¹ for its continued and active participation which is the most important element in bringing this work forward.

Goals achieved

3. In the meantime, the working group has completed tasks 1.1 and 1.2 of its terms of reference, i.e. the group has identified those combinations of physical hazards that are not possible based on the physical state (gas, liquid or solid) or based on exclusions explicitly stated in the GHS.

4. In order to decide whether the remaining – and naturally more difficult – combinations are possible or not, the group has established some guiding principles in accordance with task 1.3. These principles include the safety of the testing personnel, the possibility to carry out the respective tests and the question whether the test results can be interpreted correctly. Further principles, e.g. regarding possible redundancy of hazard communication are kept in mind and might be consulted at a later point but currently are not applied in the same way as the above-mentioned guiding principles.

¹ The experts of the Sub-Committee are asked to note that the distribution list of this informal working group consists (only) of those experts who have requested to be included in the list. Experts who would like to be added to the list are asked to send an e-mail to the expert from Germany (Cordula Wilrich).

Current work

5. In accordance with task 1.4, the group currently applies the principles as outlined in paragraph 4 to the remaining combinations of physical hazards. A cross-table with all combinations of physical hazards is fed with the according assessments and findings of the group. At the moment, these assessments of the group are still preliminary and thus will be brought forward to the sub-committees' attention at a later point.

Further issues

6. In the course of its work, the group identified some information (mainly in notes) in the GHS (and partly in the Manual of Tests and Criteria) which are unclear (or even contradictory) and due to that prevent a clear decision whether a combination is possible or not. The group considers specific proposals to amend the according text to be beyond its scope (the group is supposed to decide whether combinations of physical hazards are possible based on the existing criteria and text and not to amend these). Therefore, the group compiles these issues and intends to bring them to the sub-committees' attention so that they can clarify them as appropriate.

Future work

7. The question how to deal with the results and findings of this group was already touched upon in the group as well. However, it was agreed that the group would work on the contents of its tasks first. Once that work is done, the group would address the according task 3 of its terms of reference and discuss how the results may be used and considered in the GHS.
